



Councilman Eric Harmon

**PROPONENT TESTIMONY BEFORE THE OHIO SENATE WAYS AND MEANS
COMMITTEE
SENATE BILL 212
NOVEMBER 19, 2019**

Chair Roegner, Vice Chairman Blessing, Ranking Member Williams, and distinguished members of the Ohio Senate Ways and Means Committee, I thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony in support of Senator Schuring's Senate Bill 212. My name is Eric Harmon. I am currently a Uhrichsville City Councilman in rural Tuscarawas County located in Eastern Ohio.

Uhrichsville is a small city that has a current population of 5,340 people. According to the 1980 census data, the City of Uhrichsville held a population of 6,130 people. With several stints of economic downturn over previous decades and the sharp decline of population, Uhrichsville has lost nearly 1,000 people, leaving our neighborhoods hollowed out and dis-invested in. This decline in population also leaves Uhrichsville at the brink of losing its status as a city. Neighborhood blight poses a serious public safety and quality of life issue for many residents. Dilapidated houses, vacant lots, and abandoned buildings affect public health, safety, property values, and population growth. Neglected neighborhoods and blighted properties are not only considered to be eye sores but also an impediment to Uhrichsville's revitalization and the overall quality of life in our community. Dilapidated houses, vacant lots, and abandoned buildings affect public health, safety, property values, and population growth. These empty structures can destabilize neighborhoods and drive down property values of homes around them. They can also end up being used for illegal activity and become fire hazards.

With that being said, Senate Bill 212 will greatly assist small towns like Uhrichsville with encouraging neighborhood investment, which will lead to the eradication of blight and eventual property value increases. This opportunity for the City of Uhrichsville is transformational. Moreover, Senate Bill 212 would allow the City of Uhrichsville to designate a portion of territory as a Neighborhood Development Area (NDA) which would permit developers and owners of newly constructed single family homes within the NDA to apply to the local school board for a full or partial property tax exemption that would continue throughout the construction and market period and for ten years after the home becomes occupied. Senate Bill 212 would also allow owners who renovate single-family homes within an NDA to apply for an incremental value exemption that continues for five years. I have long heard the concerns to give

more attention to Uhrichsville neighborhoods and Senate Bill 212 provides an opportunity to change the landscape and prepare for further neighborhood revitalization.

If approved, Senate Bill 212 would help the City of Uhrichsville address a severe issue in our town that has contributed to population decline; blight. Senate Bill 212 will encourage neighborhood investment in Uhrichsville and will also foster increases in property values. Senate Bill 212 will further improve blighted neighborhoods and incentivize the construction of newly built homes in towns like Uhrichsville that are in need of population expansion and economic growth.

In closing, Senate Bill 212 will help contribute significantly to the revitalization of Uhrichsville by encouraging much needed investment in neighborhoods that are in desperate need of refurbishment and renovation. Senate Bill 212 aims to improve the quality of life for all Uhrichsville residents, and for that I would respectfully urge your support. I appreciate your time and the opportunity to provide proponent testimony in support of Senate Bill 212. At this time, I would be happy to answer any questions that any committee member may have.